

SUBMISSION TO LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE ROAD SAFETY IN
TASMANIA

SUMMARY.

Make cars a safer colour.
Make driver training available to all drivers.
Improve education.
Paint direction arrows on the road.
Make drivers aware of the characteristics of four wheel drive vehicles.
Send a Road Safety Digest to all drivers and mechanics.

MY SUBMISSION.

Road safety depends on very many factors. We Tasmanians look for one simple answer for most things but the causes of road accidents are legion and compound

For example driver attitudes developed since childhood, education, road design, "Roadside Furniture" ie telegraph poles, bridge ends etc.

Any real attempt to improve on our road safety figures will depend on many actions.

In this paper I wish to present a few of these, often missed factors. The factor two to factor five are closely related.

Factor 1. Current car colours.

If one takes a look at the colours of cars purchased for the last twenty years he or she will notice that they are dull, camouflage colours, ie dark (matching wet bitumen), dark greens (roadside foliage in shadow, dark blues (again shadow) etc. Light silver cars blend into fog better than any other colour.

Other cars are white. Fine when a car is on its own but in a group the eye very often sees a group, not individual vehicles. If you have six or seven black marbles together flashed in front of you, do you see individual marbles or a group? This matters when a group of white cars (and there are many such) are coming toward you at speed. It is easy to miss one. One only of these vehicles has to do something unexpected and you will take one or two seconds to select it out.

The point is that current colours cause a driver to take a second or so to see the vehicle. Calculate how far you travel in a second at one hundred and ten kph.

When your group talks to a traffic-police officer, and you will in order to get front line problems, if you ask him or her, "Have you ever heard the statement from a person who has just caused an accident, 'Constable, I just didn't see him.'" I know the answer you will get. Now the driver's failure to see could be because he was looking at his phone or the control screen on the dash board (a crazy thing for modern manufacturers to put there.) it may be because he was distracted by something outside the car or he may just have been too tired. (I told you there were a myriad of causes). In many cases I guarantee the car that was coming will be a camouflage colour. Even the reds and oranges have a percentage of black in them today.

The above means that unknowingly car buyers are likely putting themselves, their wives and children, in an obscured vehicle and in danger of being hit. There needs to be research into what degree colour is responsible for accidents.

Remember there will still be thousands of second hand dull coloured vehicles on the road for at least twenty more years for him or his wife to run into.

Were car colours ever bright? Check those of XA, XB, XC Ford Falcon fastbacks of the 1970's. There is a Ford coupe club who can help answer this question. Check the website.

I know what you are thinking. "Ok, smart alec what's the solution?"

First research this assertion. An art student, particularly masters or PHD may be interested. Better a couple and correlate results.

If it is found to be a cause of accidents decrease the registration fees on brightly coloured cars and balance that with increased fees on camouflage coloured vehicles, including white, particularly dulled down white.

Remember one in five males is red/green colour blind. Yellow and bright blue are definable to them reds and greens were described to me by a severely colourblind man as "sort of brown".

Then publish the reason for the change of registrations costs LOUDLY!

There is always a hidden problem. As stated the second hand camouflaged cars will remain a problem for many years. But if it is not done now the problem will go on forever.

Factor 2. Driver training.

Driving is now a necessity for today's society to operate. The cost of road accidents to society in money terms is enormous. Higher if the cost to society and their parents of educating and training them is calculated. It seldom is. "The value of skills and knowledge, ie trade skills, volunteer skills etc, lost to the state this year as a result of road accidents is \$?????"

The cost of losing human beings, their personalities, love, their support to friends and family is totally incalculable. Someone making a submission to you will provide in dollar costs. Only a loved one can outline the human cost.

Today, like reading and writing, accident avoidance is a critical skill which we learn when young, then think we can perfect by our own experiences.

In our cars we carry passengers. Commercial pilots skills have to be checked regularly by check captains but drivers, even driving twelve seater vehicles will usually rely on that first training.

Some years ago, when I was working at TAFE, the Automotive Section set up a one day defensive driver training course for staff. Many staff had to travel to rural areas to provide training and this caused concern that they were at increased risk of car accidents.

Being required by my job to travel the state in Tafe vehicles, and being a petrol head, I was one of the first to volunteer.

There were two parts to the course, the theory and the practical.

The course was carried out at Simmons Plains car circuit. It was a revelation to me. As the day rolled on I became more and more aware of the poor driving teaching skills my cousin (Aged sixteen and able to drive around the paddock) taught me. I became aware of the bad habits I had slipped into and what I could do to improve my, and my passengers safety along with the danger I presented to other drivers.

On return I bade all my staff attend. Bullied may be a better word. On return ALL of them were praising the teachers and the course, saying that they drove home far differently from the person that drove down there.

The point. We rely on what we learnt from our first instructor, whoever they were and however skilled they were at driving and teaching.

Here's the problem. When the course was made available to industry and the general public there was a cost and not a lot of people enrolled. I believe the course is no longer offered.

The solution.

Peoples' driving skills are essential for society to function, and lack of skills and knowledge kills people. Funded from taxation, put on such courses for each and every age group. The problems for

young people are different from those of older people and these are different from aged people. A quick hunt on Google will provide many references to the problems of aging drivers.

The cost of police and ambulance attendance, appropriate hospital actions, rehab if necessary, police charges, court costs, legal aid costs would more than cover the cost of these one day sessions. Add the cost to society of losing a worker for a period or forever, the increase in insurance costs etc and it would be well worthwhile.

These courses need to be funded from consolidated revenue because those who most need this course are usually those who do not have the money to take on "For Profit" defensive driving courses.

Factor 3. Education

It is extremely interesting that no-body has noticed that there is a correlation between the low levels of education and literacy in Tasmania, (ie. we have been found to have a 50% functional literacy rate) and the low levels of health, (even when the age factor is taken into account).

In the 1980's Professor Steven Leader, of the University of New South Wales did some seminal work on the health benefits of education. He found that the health, occupational safety and road safety information was written by educated people who communicated well with other educated people but with the poorer educated, it just did not work.

This has been confirmed by numerous researchers for the last thirty years.

The problem lies with the Westminster System which divides responsibility to separate ministers and departments.

The solution: Put more money into improving the average education of Tasmanians. Thus the solution may lie with the Legislative Council where the incumbents are required to have a better overall picture.

Factor 4. Painting Traffic Direction Arrows on the road.

There are many US and Chinese tourists visiting New Zealand. There have been many crashes where drivers who are used to driving on the right side of the road have killed and injured local people. Understandably the locals were very upset.

The Department of Roads painted traffic direction arrows on the road to show which side cars are to drive. Accidents are most common where vehicles are turning out of parks or side roads.

The arrows have been found to work.

A couple of weeks ago two mainland tourists hit a truck when passing traffic and both were killed. Mainland highways are dual lane. That is two lanes travelling in one direction. On that stretch of the midlands where the accident occurred was two lanes travelling in different directions. It is possible that they just acted on impulse unconsciously expecting that both lanes were travelling in the same direction. Would direction arrows have made a difference? Who knows? I believe so. I am aware of a situation a couple of years ago where a police officer was travelling on a single direction, dual lane south bound road past the Trevallyn Power station when a car came in the other direction at sixty kph. He was in a serious quandary. Turn and chase him (and risk the problem of two cars travelling in the wrong direction) or get onto the northbound upper road. When he caught him the man was an American tourist. Road arrows would have turned him around at the point of entry.

To prevent head on collisions it may be wise to paint many arrows on road surfaces showing traffic flow.

Solution: This will rely on research of how many head on collisions or near collisions, if possible, and decide on empirical data how large a problem exists or will exist if and when tourists return. If there's a change arrows would make a difference let's paint them

Factor 5. Four wheeled drive cars.

I once had a car that had been fitted with "tractor treads" by the previous owner. On a wet road it slid everywhere. Being young I saw handling it a challenge. Road speeds were slow in those days. I have never heard or seen it made public that off road vehicles ie Toyota Hiluxes are unstable due to a high centre of gravity and less effective than a normal car on the road as the tyres are a cross between a road tyres fitted to cars and a tractor that need to pull out of mud etc.

A visit to a four wheel drive vehicle wrecking yard is an education as most of the workers there can tell you what happened to each vehicle written off.

Also the higher you are off the road the slower the car appears to be travelling. (Take a ride in a go-kart if you are not sure of this.

Solution: Make these facts public.

6. A Road Safety Digest.

This suggestion comes as part of Factor 3.

For drivers there is no ongoing information source of information about changing vehicles, rules, roads, traffic flows etc. As stated age brings different challenges for drivers. The above are seldom pointed out to the general public at a time when those people have time to consider, think about the problems and solutions.

Driving is also treated as a mundane skill.

Some years ago pilots received from the Department of Civil aviation a magazine called "The Aviation Safety Digest. This was sent to all pilots and registered aviation workers, air traffic controllers, aircraft maintenance engineers and consisted of articles on real air accidents and their causes. It sometimes had a theme, eg problems with weather, loss of engines etc. Sometimes it pushed attitudes eg if you were a pilot (substitute driver here) you had a professional responsibility to preserve life and limb. It was repeatedly stated that this attitude was expected of a licence holder and would be reinforced by examples of good attitudes and how they manifested in daily duties. One was the pilot's responsibility to hand over a perfectly operating plane (here read car) and the mechanics professional responsibilities to the pilot, passengers and general public. The positive results and negative results of actions.

We often hear of car accidents, drivers being taken to court but seldom read of the detailed accident investigator's findings. When did you see a detailed report of exactly what went wrong? What negative attitudes caused it and what positive attitudes are expected.

Such a paper magazine and on line magazine would have positive results. If it can be done for aircraft accidents why not motor vehicle accidents? More passengers are killed and injured in car accidents in Australia than in aircraft accidents.

TYING ALL THIS TOGETHER IN ONE RATHER LONG SENTENCE.

Drivers, half of whom are functionally illiterate, or from overseas or the mainland, many without updated driver training, are expected to understand the importance of colour when purchasing a motor vehicle, know the road rules on our rather confusing roads, know the characteristics of the many different vehicles, and be able to update their knowledge of current road safety rules, without an interesting, clear, constantly updated information source.

THE BIG PROBLEM

I understand the underlying problem.

Fixing all the problems will cost quite a lot of money. Tasmania has been selling off its farms, inventions, businesses and houses to overseas investors of other states and other countries. This will put us in a position where we cannot raise corporate taxes without putting jobs in jeopardy. We will have insufficient funds to provide all essential services such as those suggested and will be unable to raise taxes on residents as they already have lower incomes than other states.

In short where will the money come from to install the suggestions you will receive and save lives? Both Tasmanian lives tourists, interstate and overseas business people etc.

Your inquiry into road accident avoidance is extremely important. For Tasmanian's sake, good luck.

George Chandler. B.A.Soc.Wk.(Structural) Dip.Train. and Assess. (This just means I have been trained and employed to make systems in our society work.)

Allison Waddington

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 16 August 2021 8:12 PM
To: RST
Subject: Submission to Legislative Council Select Committee Road Safety in Tasmania.
Additional Information

Dear Chairperson,

Please add to my submission this additional information.

Factor 6. A road safety digest.

I have since learned that the Tasmanian Government through MAST (Marine Safety Tasmania) regularly sends out just such a booklet spelling out current and new rules re boating, info re safety on the water etc., to all holders of boat licences.

You should be able to obtain an example of this magazine for your committee's perusal through Service Tas.

Thank you.
George Chandler.